

Application for Bishop for the Diocese of TN : Entry # 4871

Full Name

David Andrew Olivo

Preferred Name (if different)

Andy

Current Ecclesial Role / Title:

Rector

Diocese / Jurisdiction:

Newark

Current Parish, Cathedral, or Ministry Setting:

St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, Ridgewood, NJ

Please provide a link to a recorded service or homily you have delivered:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3Maz2ahB8s&t=2358s>

Please attach a copy of your CV:

- See link on profile page

Please provide links to your social media accounts:

facebook.com/daolivo
instagram.com/daolivo

Date ordained to Diaconate

06/04/2011

Diocese

East Tennessee

Date ordained to Priesthood

12/12/2011

Diocese

East Tennessee

Theological education (degrees, institutions)

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The School of Theology, the University of the South, Sewanee, TN; Master of Divinity, May 2011 and Milligan University, Johnson City, TN; Bachelor of Arts in Bible/Religion, May 2008

Additional education or certifications relevant to episcopal ministry

December 2022: Lombard Mennonite Peace Center Certificate in Conflict Management and Mediation Skills Training — Weeklong training designed to equip church leaders with skills necessary to deal effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict.

September 2020-June 2021: Villanova Certificate in Church Management: 12 sessions on Church Management Literacy taught by professors from the Villanova Center for Church Management.

September 2019: Lake Institute Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising — Conference sponsored by the Lily Foundation and focused on stewardship and philanthropy in faith communities.

September 2018: Prepare/Enrich — Facilitator training for clergy working with engaged and married couples.

October-December 2017: Financial Management for Episcopal Parishes — Online course taught through the Episcopal Church Divinity School of the Pacific.

Please summarize your vocational journey, highlighting roles that have most shaped your leadership and pastoral identity.

Though not raised in the Church, one of my favorite theologians, Mister Rogers, once said to the kids in his neighborhood, "The real issue in life is not how many blessings we have, but what we do with our blessings. Some people have many blessings and hoard them. Some have few and give everything away."

As a young child, when I would hear people like Fred Rogers, my parents, teachers and other role models speak about caring for each other, I knew I wanted that to be my work. When I found myself yearning for God, the Church, and the scriptures, I started to understand more and more how that deep desire to share my blessings with others could be lived out: as a follower of Jesus. I realized the more I was willing to give, the more I would become like God who gave the greatest give of all: his only Son.

As I continued to grow in my faith and then discover the Episcopal Church while in college, I began to understand that that deeply held feeling that had been growing in me was God's way of calling me to ordained ministry.

Preaching is one of the greatest joys of my life, and I've been privileged to preach the Good News in several different contexts. First, in a large, urban parish in East Tennessee; then in the midst of presidents, politicians, and those with great power in

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Washington, DC; and now in a suburban church with members young and old sharing the same pew as they hear about Jesus.

I deeply believe that an effective preacher means being a relationship-builder. Having relationships with the people I'm called to serve helps me to answer what my preaching professor at Sewanee called "The Homiletical Question". That question asks, "What does the Holy Spirit want the people of God to hear from these [biblical] texts on this occasion?" The best way to answer that question is to show up and be a loving, pastoral presence in the lives of others.

Bishop Bennett Sims, the sixth bishop of Atlanta, said that to be a pastor and servant leader means that one does at least these four things: 1. Love your people. 2. Build Community. 3. Say your prayers. 4. Have fun.

As I think about my vocational journey, I'm blessed to say that I'm doing what I can to serve my people in that way. And it all started with that simple understanding that sharing whatever blessings I have with others is how I can best serve and love my neighbors.

Describe your sense of call to the episcopate. How do you understand the bishop's vocation as chief pastor of the Diocese of Tennessee?

One of the aspects of the Christian tradition that has shaped my faith and life is Benedictine spirituality, especially the vow of stability. In *Wisdom Distilled From the Daily*, Sister Joan Chittister says this vow "deals directly with three things: centeredness, commitment and relationships. It is persistence and perseverance in the face of obstacles and difficulties. [It] enables us to live totally in God and for others."

I think her words describe well my sense of call to the episcopate. In the seven years I've served as rector of my current parish, I've lost count of the number of times someone (usually by another clergy person) has asked me: "Where do you want to go after you leave St. Elizabeth's?" It's asked as if my current ministry is just a stepping stone to some "greater" ministry, whatever that might mean.

I don't think there is anything wrong with thinking about the future, especially if one feels as if they've completed the work God called them to do in their current context, but I start each morning with one of my favorite prayers in our prayerbook that begins "This is another day, O Lord. I know not what it will bring forth, but make me ready, Lord, for whatever it may be (BCP, p. 461)." God will make it clear when it is time for a change.

We have so little stability in our world today. Frankly, we have little stability in the Episcopal Church some days. We speak as if our denomination is already dead and gone, and we've forgotten that even the gates of hell will not destroy the Church.

However, God continues to do new things in our church, and the bishop should be one who, like a skilled chess player, sees the whole board and moves not reactively but strategically. That requires that the bishop not only have a deep faith in Christ but also be willing to trust, listen, and empower their people for ministry in an ever-evolving, especially the clergy whom they shepherd.

The Diocese of Tennessee says it has three core priorities: Unity, Discipleship, and Evangelism. Those are all at the heart of the bible; those are all at the heart of our Christian faith. A bishop who is compassionate, practical, and flexible can unify their clergy and people of differing opinions as they do the work of making and growing disciples.

In my fifteen years of ordained ministry, that has been a priority for me. I believe I have the necessary gifts to be that kind of bishop in your diocese. Wherever I am, I'm committed, with God's help, to being a stabilizing, compassionate, and joyful leader.

How do you nurture your own spiritual life and how would it shape your public ministry as bishop? How do you practice wellness, spiritually, emotionally, and physically?

The Catholic priest and poet Michael Quoist wrote a prayer that I think about often. It starts out: "I don't know why, Lord, but when I was praying this morning I suddenly realized that I never imagined you laughing." And then he ends his prayer with this petition:

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"I want to say to you this evening, Lord, 'Make me laugh!' Yes, Lord, that's my strange prayer. Make me laugh, so that I, in my turn, can make my brothers and sisters laugh. They really need to!"

One of the best ways my spiritual life is nurtured and shaped is through laughter. I like to laugh, and I especially like being with others who make me laugh. Thanks be to God, there are many people in my life who know that laughter and joy are such important parts of my faith.

Of course, I don't laugh all the time. Some days I weep; some days I rage; some days I don't even know what to say and so I try my best to lean on the "Spirit who intercedes with sighs too deep for words (Romans 8.26)."

Whatever I'm experiencing, I'm intentional about making time to be with the Lord. The three primary ways I do this are the Daily Office (Morning and Evening Prayer from the 1979 BCP), saying the Rosary while I walk my dogs, and listening to a podcast called "Pray As You Go". These practices, along with receiving and celebrating the Holy Eucharist, are the main anchors of my prayer life.

The other anchor is my family: my wife and three kids. My family keeps me grounded, they remind me not to take everything too seriously, and, most wonderfully, they assure me that even on my worst days I'm still loved, at least by God and them.

My bishop, wisely, requires that all her clergy have a spiritual director, a therapist, and a confessor. While I initially grumble some days at the thought of pausing to see these smart people, I am grateful for them when our time together comes to a close.

Speaking of my therapist, as I recently approached my 40th birthday, I told them that every week I seem to have an appointment with a new doctor. My therapist then told me that getting older means realizing that you now have more doctors than friends. I'm now searching for a new therapist...only kidding!

I do my best to move my body, eat well, get sleep, say my prayers, to smile, and to say "thank you" whenever possible. My faith brings me great joy--it is **good** news that we preach, after all. And I try to live by the blessing a wise priest once offered me: *May Jesus' love for you always make you smile.*

What does faithfulness, vitality, and witness to the gospel look like for congregations of different sizes, settings, and resources?

Like many other dioceses, your churches are led not only by clergy but, more and more, by gifted, faithful lay leaders. In my own diocese, I have been active in teaching and training lay leaders for ministry in the church, as well as working to identify and assist new clergy as they learn how to share the Gospel in their particular contexts and communities. As I often remind those with whom I work and teach, this requires nimbleness if we want to be effective in what God is calling us to do.

Episcopalians are a people of common prayer not conforming prayer which means that we have a shared way of living and being followers of Jesus that can be expressed different ways. We are an orderly bunch, and things like rubrics, tradition, and canons are important. But so is listening to the needs of the communities our churches serve. What works well in one parish in the heart of large city will likely be different in a small, rural parish. Being flexible, trying new things, not being afraid of change, while also staying rooted in our Episcopal and Anglican traditions is necessary if we want to remain vital.

One of my favorite hymns in our hymnal starts out: "Lord, you give the great commission: 'Heal the sick and preach the word.' Lest the church neglect its mission, and the gospel go unheard, help us witness to your purpose with renewed integrity. With the Spirit's gifts empower us for the work of ministry".

Healing the sick; preaching the word; caring for the marginalized in our midst; this is our shared mission as followers of Jesus. And the Holy Spirit empowers our churches to do this work in lots of different ways. As Bishop of the Diocese of Tennessee, I would work to be a nimble leader, committed to seeing how our churches can work collaboratively to fulfill our Lord's great commission.

Describe how you exercise authority and leadership in complex systems. How do you make decisions and communicate them broadly and with transparency?

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Unlike bishops in other Christian traditions, our bishops are chosen by clergy and lay representatives of a diocese (delegates) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That means a few things: 1. The bishop needs to feel truly called by the Spirit to be effective in this complex ministry. 2. That call needs to be evident to those who are searching for, interviewing and ultimately, electing the bishop. 3. The bishop must gain the trust of the clergy and people of the diocese.

As to point one, the sense of being called by the Spirit can be difficult to describe. It happens through discernment and prayer and lots of listening to how others view your God-given gifts. I've been encouraged enough times by colleagues and mentors to consider putting myself forward to be a bishop. It's a somewhat scary process, if I'm being honest, but I would not have submitted this information without having felt that I could handle the complexity of the episcopate. To that end, I believe the Spirit is calling me to something new and as I potentially continue the discernment with you all, I'm excited for the journey.

As to the second point, clear and concise communicator are skills I've worked to hone over the years. I've had excellent mentors and teachers who have taught me the importance of being able to speak to people in different contexts. That means spending time with people, listening to people, and getting to know people. In short, it means building relationships so that when the bishop needs to communicate, whether it be in preaching, in teaching, in leading meetings, or in writing, the bishop will know the best way to get their message to the diocese effectively.

I also believe a bishop needs to not only be good at preaching. Effectively communicating and interpreting the Gospel is a holy task entrusted to bishops. In many ways, they set the standard for the clergy in their diocese. Preaching is one of my favorite parts of my ministry. I believe I'm a good preacher. I believe I've learned how to speak to people in different contexts. I would relish the opportunity to preach to the people of the Diocese of Tennessee alongside the clergy who commit themselves to this holy task if elected bishop.

As to the third point, in all the three dioceses where I have served, I have good, close, and trusting relationships with my clergy colleagues. Not only do they feel comfortable coming to me for advice, but they regularly put me forward to leadership positions. This is because they know they can trust me. And that trust has been gained as we've worked alongside each other. Trust when electing a bishop must be earned—it is not automatically given. I work hard to earn the trust of my colleagues by listening to them, praying with and for them, being honest and transparent with them, and respecting them even if we are not always in agreement about a particular issue, theological or otherwise.

How would you support clergy across theological differences, vocational stress, and personal challenges?

The late Timothy Keller wrote that as American and western culture has shifted away from faith and become more secular, our identities are no longer shaped by God but have latched on to politics, social media, or other influences. No longer is our first response upon waking to praise God with the Shema or the Lord's Prayer, but rather to pick up our phones to check in on social media and our preferred news sources. By the time we've gotten out of bed, we're already charged and ready for a fight, and we carry all those ideologies with us all day long and wherever we go. Those ideologies often pit us against each other, and if we're not careful we see our neighbors not as people to be loved but as enemies to be toppled.

Sadly, I think that has also become prevalent amongst the clergy of the Episcopal Church and many other denominations. Clergy can be quick to criticize, attack, and even demean those who don't share our worldviews. Perhaps some time together in study and prayer of the Letter of James might help us during this time:

"You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves (1.19-22)."

When I joined the Episcopal Church, one of the many things I loved was the notion that our particular branch of Christianity was a "big tent". There is room enough for everyone, we would often say. Those days sometimes seem to be behind us.

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The work of the clergy is more challenging now than it has been in a long time, which means we need each other. We need to come together, to pray together, to laugh together, to remember that it is Christ who has called us to bear witness together.

I think this is where the bishop, as chief pastor of a diocese, can do real good, or, if not careful, real harm. I think of bishops like Frank Griswold who desperately wanted everyone to be at the table together and part of the conversation. He had ears to hear and he knew that all the different voices mattered. Bishop Griswold was an excellent example of what it looks like to find common ground amidst differences both great and small.

A bishop plays a special role in the lives of their clergy, and the best bishops I've known are the ones who listen to the hopes, fears, stresses, challenges, and then do what they can so that all their clergy have the opportunity to thrive in their particular contexts.

Here George Washington's model of leadership might be helpful for our bishops as they prayerfully and carefully work to guard the faith, **unity**, and discipline of the Church. Washington famously said, "First you listen, then you learn, then you help, and then you lead."

Here is the good news (there is always Good News in the Church): I think that the young clergy of our church are sick and tired of being sick and tired, and they are committed to the support and care of their colleagues in ministry. *All their colleagues.*

I once heard someone say that even though humanity often divides, Jesus unites. May all our bishops be united in sustaining and supporting their clergy.

Describe your approach to conflict, reconciliation, and when necessary, discipline. How would you help the diocese remain rooted in the Gospel?

St. Paul says in Second Corinthians that through Christ we have been given the ministry of reconciliation (5.18). What he doesn't say there (but it is certainly evident in his writings) is that reconciliation is rarely easy. That's because we've been taught that we should do our very best to avoid conflict altogether, or conflict with a winner and loser result. While I certainly don't seek out conflict, when it comes I'm not afraid to address it and work hard to come to a win-win resolution.

What I've learned over the course of my ministry and with groups like the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center is that reconciliation may be possible if both parties are willing to resolve conflict by addressing it prayerfully, directly, and in a way where both sides feel they have been heard. Of course, that doesn't always work and, at times, there will be "winners" and "losers". My primary goal in conflict resolution is to work hard to make sure all are heard and all are respected.

Unfortunately, there are times when a misdeed is committed that requires discipline. If the wrong done is criminal in some way, then it must be reported to legal authorities and addressed immediately. If the misdeed is not criminal but still conduct unbecoming then our church has a disciplinary process to address the issue. As we've seen over the past several years, the Episcopal Church's Title IV process isn't perfect but, thankfully, it is being reviewed and changed where it is found to be problematic. Being intentional about following all the necessary steps in our disciplinary process is something the bishop must do. In matters of discipline, I believe it's of the utmost importance to do our very best to respect and care for all involved as those in the process do their work.

That means that discipline should begin and end with prayer for all involved as we seek to make right some wrong. Confidentiality, directness, respect, and a clear understanding of the disciplinary process are vital. All clergy, but especially bishops, must ensure that all people know that the Church is doing its very best to keep them safe. I pray those responsible for governing our church will continue to improve this important process.

Discuss your experience and theology of diocesan administration, fundraising, financial stewardship, and staff leadership.

In many ways, diocesan ministry is very similar to parish ministry. By that I mean that the work of any diocese should be focused on discipleship and bringing others to Christ. A good bishop doesn't stop being a prayerful pastor and priest. How the work of

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discipleship is done is where the differences come in.

As the current Vice President of the Diocese of Newark's Standing Committee, I've come to better understand and appreciate all the work a bishop and their staff do to manage many and different complex systems. That administrative work requires patience, preparation, organization, and most of all good communication.

In order for a diocese to have solid administration a competent staff needs to be in place. Clear delineation of roles and responsibilities is important not only for the staff members working in a particular role but also so that all those in leadership positions in the various parishes, most of whom are volunteers who are giving lots of time and lots of energy to serve their church, is also a necessity.

In my ministry I work to be a transformational and trusting leader. I have a history of inspiring the team I work alongside to not be afraid to try new things as well as feel supported in the work they are doing. Helping a staff do their best means reviewing together the work being done. In my current position I strive to meet with each staff member weekly to check in. I always make sure to ask these two questions: 1. What is the most important thing(s) you are working on this week? 2. What do you need or how can I help to accomplish that work? The first question allows me to understand what they think is most important in the parish at that time. The second question lets them know that I trust and support them in their work, and that I will do all I can to help them succeed. I can't always give them what they ask for, but at least I have a better understanding of what they need to succeed.

Maybe the most important part of my role as the leader of my staff team is to thank them often. We are partners in ministry and I want to celebrate and thank the members when we do well, and support them when they need help.

As many churches say prior to celebrating the Eucharist "All things come of thee". All that we have is a gift and we have a responsibility to give back to God and the Church. I genuinely believe that generosity and giving is a spiritual virtue that not only makes us feel good but also transforms us. When we give we are transformed and become more and more like God who gives us all we need. Giving reminds us that there is always enough.

Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy's hymn (#9 in the 1982 Hymnal) "Not here for high and holy things" reminds us that when we "give and give and give again, what God hath given thee" then our souls are "set ablaze" by Jesus. My theology of fundraising and financial stewardship stems from my desire to be set ablaze by Jesus my Lord.